A 1/27 Independent

As The Village Turns

By Rich Tosches

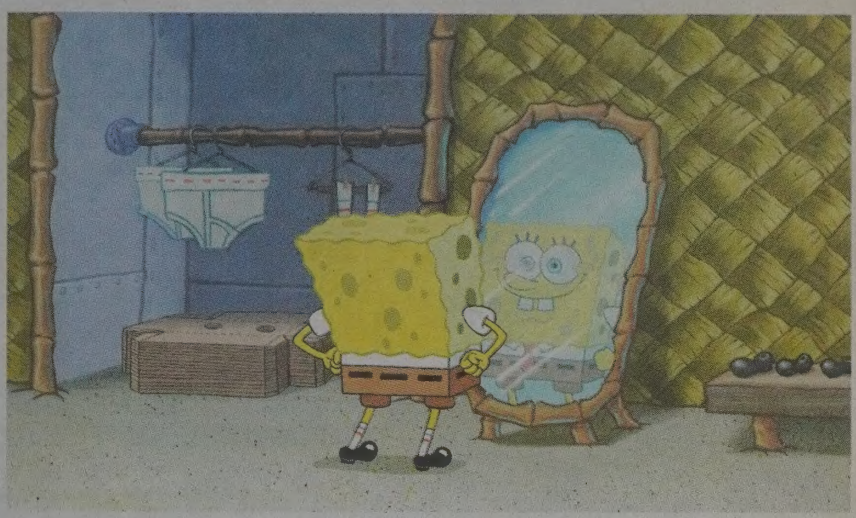
Focus on SpongeBob

I still love watching all the kids' television cartoons. Big Bird and his wacky Sesame Street friends make me howl. The new wave of cartoons such as *Bob the Builder* and *Dora the Explorer* are a hoot, too. And I can't recall ever laughing as hard as I did last Saturday morning during an episode of *Clifford the Big Red Dog* when Clifford became sexually attracted to SpongeBob SquarePants and began humping his leg.

OK, Clifford didn't really do that.

But unless parents take action right now against cartoon characters advocating the gay lifestyle, the moral fabric of our great nation will soon unravel. Before we know it, Barney is going to move in with Winnie the Pooh and we, as parents, are going to have to explain to little Billy why his favorite cartoon characters are acting so, well, *different*. ("Mommy, Mommy! Why is Barney rubbing honey on Pooh's bum?")

Fortunately, a gay cartoon character awareness campaign has been launched by Focus on the Family ("Adam and Eve, Not Adam and Yogi Bear") and the equally concerned and intellectual American Family Association ("Bert and Ernie Make Us Want To Puke!").



The cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants has raised the hackles of Focus on the Family president James Dobson.

'Pro-homosexual video'

Focus guru James Dobson, whose skin itches when he even *thinks* about how "Dora the Explorer" got that nickname, kicked the anti-gay cartoon movement into high gear in Washington last week during a Bible-thumping speech to members of Congress: The speech came two days before President Eeyore was sworn in for his second term.

"An effort to indoctrinate children to accept homosexuality."

According to a story in the *New York Times*, Dobson made a reference to SpongeBob SquarePants and then told the group that SpongeBob's creators are using the funny little guy in a "pro-homosexual video" — along with Barney, Jimmy Neutron, Elmo, Cookie Monster, the Bear in the Big Blue House, the Little Mermaid and other many cartoon characters.

Footnote: Ariel the mermaid was so upset by this accusation that she spent two days crying and cuddling with her friend, Donna the Bisexual Tuna. And Cookie Monster responded by sending a double-batch of ExLax Macaroons to Focus headquarters.

'Potentially brainwashing kids'

The evil, work-of-Satan video Dobson referred to is called *We Are Family*, a cartoon character singalong to the 1970s hit song of the same name. The video will be sent to some 61,000 elementary schools across the nation as part of the proposed March 11 "We Are Family Day."

The video, according to its producer, attempts to promote the second and third most disgusting things in the eyes of Focus and American Family Association: tolerance and diversity. (The *most* disgusting thing to the two organizations: seeing Bruce the Octopus holding hands with the Seven Dwarfs — and having the eighth tentacle free in case he wants to grope Sneezy.)

From Paul Batura, assistant to Dobson: "We see the video as an insidious means by which the organization is manipulating and potentially brainwashing kids."

Focus, as we know, is adamantly opposed to any type of brainwashing or coercion, especially in cases involving ignorant and uneducated people who will rot in hell unless they send in their monthly Focus donation envelopes.

My favorite line in this controversy came from Ed Vitagliano, who works for American Family Association and describes himself as a "researcher." Here now, his actual quote:

"While we want everyone to respect other people's beliefs, we do not consider it appropriate for children's television to be used in an effort to indoctrinate children to accept homosexuality."

Judging by the way that sentence makes no sense whatsoever, I'm guessing Vitagliano writes a lot of President Eeyore's speeches.

'Tolerance is a personal decision'

Partners with We Are Family Foundation in the video project include the Anti-Defamation League, the Disney Channel, PBS and the Sesame Workshop.

The We Are Family Foundation's Tolerance Pledge states this: "Tolerance is a personal decision that comes from a belief that every person is a treasure. I believe that America's diversity is its strength. I also recognize that ignorance, insensitivity and bigotry can turn that diversity into a source of prejudice and discrimination."

And if you're Focus on the Family or the American Family Association, it can be turned into something even more important: a steady cash flow.

Mark Barondess, the attorney for the We Are Family Foundation that produced the video, told the *New York Times* that Focus, the American Family Association and other critics of the cartoon singalong, "need medication."

Just like in the hilarious SpongeBob SquarePants episode scheduled to air this Saturday.

I don't want to ruin it for you or in any way offend the Focus community, but in this episode the main character mixes up his pill bottles, accidentally takes an entire handful of Viagra and for about four hours is transformed into a different character.

That's right: SpongeBob *Triangle*Pants.

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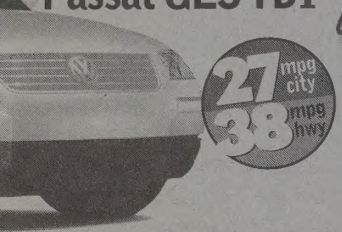

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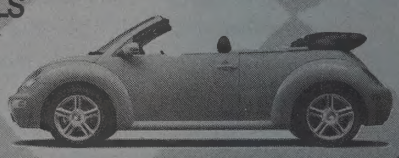

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